



The Blaze

A Publication of the Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association

1st Quarter Blaze 2018

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello, fellow Fire Commissioners, and welcome to 2018.

We are now 1 month into our new year and one thing is remaining constant throughout our state; we are experiencing rapid commercial and residential growth at unprecedented levels. The cost of providing emergency services is not keeping up with growth in many cases. Equipment replacement costs are higher, along with costs of training (career and volunteer members), insurance, fuel and inspections, just to name a few of the ever-changing challenges we face. So, what do we do? What has worked and what should we consider doing differently?

The option, which I hope many of us elected fire commissioners throughout the state do, is embrace the challenges and opportunities presented as we network with fellow commissioners. You can start by attending the various trainings offered throughout the state, attending your neighboring fire district board meetings and working alongside your respective fire chief in understanding our statutes and boundaries which govern fire districts in Idaho.

In understanding, the statutes coupled with the constituents' needs, we should always consider these two areas at all times. First, the ability to balance the growing demand for services verses the available dollars to fund them. The growth we are experiencing creates an immediate demand for services, but the receipt of tax dollars is up to 1+ years before they are realized into our budgets. In striving to meet this demand, do we have the proper equipment, facilities, and district members with leadership willing to get us where we need to be? Secondly, do you have an ongoing form of strategic planning which is driven by the increased demands for service while balancing current and future operational costs of which the cost of department members is our largest expense?

Are you involved with legislation as a board? This should include knowing and communicating with the legislators who approve the rules we must follow, as well as those associations that interact with them. One of the most important areas to focus on is working together on proposed changes which effect fire districts. Staying vigilant for legislative bills that are introduced externally that may affect fire districts is crucial. With our ability to come together and provide input, Idaho's fire districts can effectively function and are not hindered by lack of knowledge and communication.

Continued, page 2

2018 ISFCA Board of Directors

David "Rudy" Rudebaugh, President

Steve Frazee, Vice President

Doug Mayne, Sec./Treasurer

Steve Frazee, Past President

Wayne Cavender, Region 1

Charles "Hoey" Graham, Region 2

Jack Hellbusch, Region 3A

Bud Beatty, Region 3B

Les Preader, Region 4

Mike Taylor, Region 5

Roy Barrett, Region 6A

Doug Martin, Region 6B

At Large Seats:

Holger "Andy" Petersen

Gary Rohwer

Tim Vargas

Office Contact:

Krystal Hinkle, Executive Director

Contact Information

Phone: 208-275-8870

Email : office@isfca.org

www.isfca.org

Continued ... President's Message

Some may ask how do we accomplish this. First is membership in associations like ISFCA (Idaho State Fire Commissioners' Association) who represents 165 fire districts, containing an estimated 450 to 750 elected officials; IFCA (Idaho Fire Chiefs Association) who represents 164 to 300 Fire Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs whom are employed or appointed by Fire Commissioners as the CEO's of their respective fire district; PFFI (The Professional Firefighters of Idaho) who represents 35 fire districts/departments with 1235 members and our volunteer firefighters, consisting of over 6000 members.

One cannot believe our various associations will agree on everything. However, most importantly, we must have the ability to strongly agree when possible; while given the ability to express our concerns based on open communication, education and understanding of another's position. When this approach is applied, not only will our elected legislators observe this, it further demonstrates we have a strong presence and can accomplish remarkable things for all fire districts and departments within Idaho as a team. "Just because we may not agree on X doesn't mean we should quit working together on A-V which we agree on."

I ask each elected fire commissioner to have dialog amongst your board and your fire chief, see where it may go, and give feedback during round table discussions at the next ISFCA conference.

Let's talk about ISFCA membership for a minute. What does the value of membership provide? What are some reasons a fire district may not believe membership is important or that they can or cannot afford it? First is our mission statement: "To inform, educate, represent, lead and serve the fire districts of Idaho in the preservation and protection of life and property." Currently we average 65 member districts, which directly represents 200 to 250 elected fire commissioners. When ISFCA fulfills its mission at the direction requested by current membership at the annual conference - with all fire districts in mind, not just member districts - membership is what provides the financial ability in fulfilling our mission. To be successful, we must have finances to serve all fire districts. Legislation costs money, sponsoring training for elected officials throughout the state cost money, and sponsoring of quality conferences cost money. Yes, I mentioned money. However, I am not begging for membership, but rather hoping to encourage nonmember districts to consider membership. As an organization, we can grow and keep pace with the ever-changing challenges and opportunities presented throughout the state. Beside the financial needs, one important item to remember is the elected officials themselves. When legislative topics arise, when education needs rise, when equipment purchasing arises and employee groups needs arise, the best place to design and provide solutions is the experience from the small rural districts to the combination career/volunteer. It is the elected fire district commissioner's responsibility for the correct operation of their district. The knowledge and skill set this provides, makes Idaho fire districts stronger. When we are stronger, we all can fulfill the primary mission of first class service and depth of service to those experiencing one of the worst days of their lives. The cost of membership varies based on a district's annual tax revenue and, yes, the larger districts have a higher cost of membership. It sometimes may appear they do not need these benefits of membership. However, I ask you to consider the benefits of an association that serves all of the fire districts and the positive impact that benefits each one. Representation, education, legislation and strong rounded leadership is key to any organization's success. Success is our ability to fulfill the needs of the taxpayer and visitors we serve daily throughout Idaho.

I am very appreciative and respectful of ISFCA's members who have bestowed their confidence and faith to allow me to be your President for a 3rd year. Also, during the 2017 annual conference, membership gave the regional directors clear direction on how they would like ISFCA to proceed.

I hope I have touched on a few topics that will create discussion within your fire district. Remember, a person whom is an elected fire district commissioner has commitments to their constituents and our job is never to be taken lightly and for granted. We have our fire districts and our members who rely on us daily.

Sincerely and Respectively,
David "Rudy" Rudebaugh
President, ISFCA

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Bill Number	Description	Last Action	Support/Opposed
S 1215	FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS – Amends existing law to revise a notice provision for holding an election in a fire protection district.	01/31 - Read third time in full – PASSED - 35-0-0	Support
S 1216	FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS – Amends existing law to revise the maximum amount of compensation for performing fire district business by fire protection district commissioners and to provide for special compensation upon a declaration of emergency or disaster within the fire protection district.	01/31 -Read third time in full – PASSED - 34-1-0	Support
HB 400	PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM – Amends existing law to revise a provision regarding an initial retirement allowance, to provide for how a certain early retirement benefit is determined and to provide for how a certain accrued retirement allowance is determined.	01/25 - Reported Printed and Referred to Commerce & Human Resources	Neutral
HB 401	PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM – Amends existing law to revise and add definitions.	01/25 - Reported Printed and Referred to Commerce & Human Resources	Neutral
HB 402	FIREMEN’S RETIREMENT FUND – Amends existing law to provide that certain payments and duties shall transfer to an annexing city or fire district.	01/25 - Reported Printed and Referred to Commerce & Human Resources	Neutral
HB 418	LOBBYISTS – Adds to existing law to prohibit state agencies from taking certain actions regarding lobbying.	01/29 - Reported Printed and Referred to State Affairs	No position at this time
HB 427	PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM – Amends existing law to revise the definition of “employer.”	01/29 - Reported Printed and Referred to Ways & Means	Neutral
HB 435	CANDIDATES – Amends existing law to provide that all incumbents for district, state and federal office shall file a copy of the incumbent’s most recent federal income tax return with a declaration of candidacy.	01/29 - Reported Printed and Referred to Ways & Means	No position at this time
HB 436	CANDIDATES – Amends existing law to provide that all candidates for district, state and federal office shall file a copy of the candidate’s most recent federal income tax return with a declaration of candidacy.	01/29 - Reported Printed and Referred to Ways & Means	No position at this time
HB 450	BUDGETS – Amends existing law to provide that a taxing district wishing to disclaim the right to recover a forgone budget increase shall provide notice, hold a hearing and adopt a resolution, a copy of which shall go to the county clerk and the Tax Commission.	01/31 - Reported Printed and Referred to Revenue & Taxation	Support

Please visit www.isfca.org/alerts/ to follow legislation that can affect your fire district.

One of ISFCA's Biggest Challenges, *Steve Frazee, ISFCA Vice President*

In my opinion, one of the biggest challenges that ISFCA deals with is working with the state legislation. Every legislation session, bills are introduced into either the Senate or the House that are one of three things; either they benefit fire districts, harmful to fire districts or are neutral as far as fire districts are concerned. ISFCA then decides on what position we are going to take on a bill, and how hard we are going to work on getting a bill modified, defeated, or passed. Sometimes, ISFCA spends a large amount of time and money in this effort on a single bill. Several years ago, when a bill was introduced to abolish the fire code in Idaho, ISFCA's board members spent many days at the state capitol and spent around \$25,000 in getting that bill defeated.

One of the toughest obstacles we run into when working with the Senators and Representatives, is that all too often when ISFCA approaches one of these elected officials and informs them of who ISFCA represents, we get the deer in the headlight look. They ask "What's a fire district?" Too many of the Senators and Representatives don't have a clue as to what a fire district is and what it does. The scary part, they don't know that fire commissioners are also elected officials or know what roles and liabilities fire district commissioners have in providing public safety and protection of property within our state. It takes time to explain everything we do and why we do it, and in the hectic legislative session, the legislators often times don't want to take the time to learn what they need to know.

If the state legislators could be educated on fire districts and fire district commissioners, ISFCA's job would be much easier. How do we go about doing that? This is where every fire commissioner in the state could help out. One way would be to meet and visit with the Senators or Representatives when they are not in session. Perhaps a state legislator lives down the road from you or maybe just across the field. Maybe they attend your church or some other public organization. Occasionally, meet one at a social event and have the opportunity to ask them when would be a good time to visit with them about fire districts.

That won't work for me since my state legislators represents several counties in central Idaho, and they don't live in my county, or even close to my home town. So, my plan is that the next time they are in town for a meet and greet, or a meeting, or whatever, I'm going to try and meet with them and visit about fire districts and the challenges we face. That way, I will feel comfortable and have more credibility when the time comes to contact them about the way I would like to see them vote on a bill ISFCA is working on. Who knows, I might even be able to convince one of my legislators to sponsor a bill for us.

If you get a chance to talk to one of your state legislators, please take a few minutes to educate them about fire districts, fire commissioners and ISFCA. That would definitely make our jobs so much easier the next time ISFCA approaches them regarding a legislative bill. And, who knows, the small amount of time you have spent with your legislator might make the difference as to whether ISFCA is able to achieve it's goal or not on a specific bill.

If you don't know who represents your district, please look on the legislative website, link below.

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/legislators/whosmylegislator/>

The Benefits of Fire District Automatic Aid Response,

Wayne Cavender, Region 1 Director

I would guess that most fire agencies have Mutual Aid agreements with their neighboring counterparts, but perhaps not as many have Automatic Aid. Probably not all agencies would benefit from this type of program depending on their boards and bylaws, but it could be just the ticket for some, especially smaller companies with a small volunteer base. That's the situation at South Boundary Fire Protection District in Naples.

“Mutual Aid” is what we have with most fire agencies in our county. This is when a call comes in to the dispatch center and they in turn call the home department which responds to the call. When the home department gets on scene at the incident or sometimes on the way, they may call for assistance from those with whom they have Mutual Aid.

“Automatic Aid” is when a call comes in, dispatch calls all agencies tied into this agreement immediately and automatically! All agencies respond and if it is found that no assistance is needed, the home department will release them.

At first glance this process may seem a little wasteful. Shouldn't we wait until we get on scene to determine the severity and need? How much time could it take, 5 mins, 8 mins? We all know how much a fire can change in 5 mins, even 4 or 3!!! From a kitchen fire or chimney fire to perhaps fully engulfed. Additional property damaged . . . even loss of life could result.

With Automatic Aid when we respond, North Bench Fire is also responding, resulting in increased manpower and apparatus on scene. This is not just a random apparatus, it is specific, according to the type of call, so we avoid duplication. Structure fires dictate certain apparatus from each station, and Wild Land fires, likewise, etc.

SBFPD and NBF also train together periodically so as to be familiar with each departments vehicles and where equipment is on each. Volunteers also like the increased calls as it keeps them sharp and increases stipends. A good encouragement for attracting new recruits.

In the end this will not cost SBFPD taxpayers any more nor NBF Association members any more. What it does is double up the amount of responders and equipment on each call. Each agency is responsible for its own costs.

Most importantly, it is in line with our goal as emergency responders to provide the best service we can for the communities we serve.

Newest 6A Regional Director, *Roy Barrett, Regional 6A Director*

Best to start at the beginning. I am the newest commissioner for Lemhi County Fire Protection District (LCFPD). I grew up in Salmon, Idaho and spent my professional years in the Treasure Valley, before retiring back to Salmon. Albeit new to LCFPD, I have had great respect for the department since childhood. I lived a few doors down when the “old” fire house and much of a Salmon block was destroyed in the early “60`s”. I sat on the curb, out of the way, and watched our volunteer firemen answer the call, and work tirelessly through the night to save the fire trucks and much of the equipment as well as some of the block. I watched as the walls came tumbling into the street. Much was lost, but much was saved and no lives were lost. Those memories have stayed with me, and I have had great respect and support for our volunteer firemen since that night.

Over the years, I took notice whenever the fire siren sounded and our volunteer firemen dropped whatever they were doing and answered the call. In a world where “self” seems to be gaining dominance, it is very refreshing and heartening to see volunteers answer the call to help their neighbors. I believe it fitting to thank all of you that “step-up”. I can attest that Lemhi County would be “dead in the water” without the myriad of volunteers that make our community function. LCFPD is one of four volunteer fire districts in Lemhi County and collectively they provide excellent fire protection within the county.

As mentioned, I am new to the commission. What I have learned so far is that LCFPD is very fortunate. We have a history of good management, fiscal responsibility and leadership. Our predecessors did a great job! Today our district is “blessed” with fine leaders. Chairman Steve Frazee and Commissioner Rockie Walker provide excellent planning, fiscal responsibility and oversight to the department. Chief Mike Warner has earned the respect of each and every fire-person via his leadership, knowledge, exacting training and compassion. Mike is supported by a fine crew of officers that share his mission. Last but not least, we are all kept in line by our fine secretary Sue Dickens. LCFPD has a tremendous crew of volunteer fireman. Call out attendance is high, camaraderie is excellent and we have a substantial list of citizens waiting to join the ranks. I can only thank those just mentioned for establishing such an inviting environment. Nice job! Expect that most of you feel much like I do about your district personnel. If so, saying thanks and showing appreciation is always in fashion. In future articles, I intend to discuss specifics regarding ISFCA. Who are we? Why does ISFCA exist? Why all fire districts should be members. Why some are not? I would like to hear your thoughts regarding the above questions and statement, or whatever is on your mind regarding our challenge. I also want to get in touch with my neighbors in Region 6A. Learn from them, their needs and concerns. If inclined, I can be reached at 406 Van Dreff Street Salmon, Idaho 83467.

In the meantime, I wish you well and again, thank each of you for your precious time. Kudos to you!

Sincerely,
Roy Barrett

Slash Piles, Les Preadar, Region 4 Director

This time of year, a lot of folks are burning weeds and their “slash piles”. I’ve also noted the increase in responses by fire districts and fire departments to reports of fires, smoke, unattended burns, etc. I’ve taken the liberty to use portions of an article by Chris Schnepf that appeared in the January 2017 issue of the Idaho Farm Bureau Producer magazine, titled “Ten Tips for burning slash piles”.

He includes a definition of slash as “organic material left on forest site after a harvest or thinning effort”. My version includes canal banks, weed piles, essentially all open burning materials. His enumerated list is:

- 1) Do you need to pile and burn? Right away?
- 2) Locate piles in good places (avoid building piles within 10-20 feet of driplines you want to keep.
- 3) Build piles tall and compact.
- 4) Keep dirt out of the pile, dirt can cause smoldering fires long after they are ignited. Build a 2-10 foot wide fire line around each pile to insure against fire escape.
- 5) Avoid putting coarse woody debris in the pile. Under Idaho law, the only slash that has to be treated to reduce fire hazard is material smaller than 3 inches in diameter, because small fuels ignite and carry fire more readily.
- 6) Keep the tinder dry.
- 7) GOT A PERMIT? DEPENDING ON THE TIME OF YEAR AND CURRENT FIRE CONDITIONS, YOU MAY NEED A PERMIT TO LIGHT FIRES. PERMITS ARE REQUIRED BY IDAHO CODE MAY 10-OCT 20. LOCAL JURISDICTIONS MAY HAVE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS. PERMITS ARE USUALLY SECURED THROUGH YOUR LOCAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OFFICE.
- 8) Got the necessary tools (eg, Pulaski, shovel, and ideally at least a 100 gallons of water in a tank.
- 9) Is it a good day to burn? (My notation here concerns wind, air quality, time of year, etc).
- 10) Multiple piles? Don’t light them ALL at once.

Chris Schnepf is an area extension educator – forestry- for the University of Idaho in Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai and Benewah counties. He can be reached at cschnepf@uidaho.edu.

THANK YOU SPONSORS AND VENDORS

To all of our Sponsors and Vendors, Thank You for supporting and believing in our organization. Without your continued support, ISFCA wouldn't be able to provide the educational and leadership training that we have.

2018 Sponsors and Vendors

Air Idaho Rescue — Air Methods
BNSF Railway Company
BME Fire Fighter Supply
Curtis
Disaster Kleenup
EF Recovery
Emergency Responders Health Center
Emergency Services Consulting International
Emergency Services Insurance Program (ESIP)
Graham Fire Apparatus
Hughes Fire Equipment, Inc.
ICRMP
Larsen Fire Apparatus, Inc.
Les Schwab Tire Centers
Life Flight Network
McNeil & Co.
Millington Zwygart CPAs, PLLC
Municipal Emergency Services
Provident
Rice Fergus Miller
TCA Architecture Planning, Inc.
VFIS
Weidner Fire
White Peterson Law Firm

We highly encourage you, as Fire Districts, to support our Sponsors and Vendors throughout the year with your business, as they support us. Check out our website for their contact information.